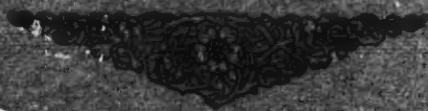


MUSSON'S EXTENSION COURSES
SERIES I

English Language and Literature

BY
L. E. HORNING, M.A., Ph.D.



LESSON No. 1

MUSSON'S EXTENSION COURSES
21 RICHMOND ST. WEST
TORONTO

Musson's Extension Courses

SERIES I.—LESSON No. 1

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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21 Richmond St. West, Toronto

PE 1075

1467

1907

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

INTRODUCTORY

PURPOSE OF COURSE

Of the many differences which exist or seem to exist between man and the rest of the animal creation, the most striking and distinctive is the ability man possesses of expressing his thoughts in words and sentences. To him it seems so very easy and very natural that he scarcely ever gives a second thought to the question of its origin, history, acquisition, or exact use. This priceless gift is valued seemingly less than the perishable things of a day. This is not as it should be, and the purpose of this course is to try and stimulate an interest in our mother tongue, its ebb and flow, its growth and decay, its extent and future.

STANDPOINTS FOR CONSIDERATION OF LANGUAGE

Language must always be considered from two standpoints, namely, that of the listener and that of the speaker. The first is conscious of

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sense-impressions, the second of movements of the vocal organs in the production of speech. Speech is really the result of the action of the vocal organs upon the air ejected from the lungs. This action produces speech-sounds, *vowels* and *consonants*. Vowels have voice but no friction, consonants are made by the friction of the voice against some part of the mouth or throat. Some vowels are produced in the back of the mouth (*back* or *guttural*, *velar*), some in the *front*, or *palatal*, some when the tongue is *high*, some when it is *low*, some when the lips and organs generally are tense (*narrow*), some when all are lax (*wide*), some when the lips are *rounded* as in whistling, some are *unrounded*, and all the other names that phoneticians give to the manner of production. So with the consonants which are *velar* (*back*, under the veil), *alveolar*, *dental*, *labial*, *palatal*, *nasal*, etc. So it has ever been and must have been from the beginning. *Phonetics*, or the science of speech-sounds, teaches us that there is an almost infinite variety of such sounds, and that they often vary in one and the same individual. Hence the difficulty of the adult with his fixed habits when he attempts to learn the new speech-sounds of a foreign language.

Long after speech was developed, writing (the word originally meant scratch) was invented, taking at first the form of pictures, for which

later written symbols were used, which represented entire words. Later they represented syllables, and last of all were used as letters. Our own alphabet has come from the Latins, that from the Greeks, who borrowed of the Semites, and they of the Egyptians. But the difficulty has always been, and always will be, that the great variety of sounds in a spoken language, finds very tardy and very inadequate expression in the written language. There is no language with a perfect alphabet, nor has the written form ever kept pace with the changes which constantly go on in the spoken. English is the most striking example of the divergence between the two, for the spelling was largely stereotyped in the fifteenth century by the introduction of printing (Caxton, 1476), but our pronunciation has gone through a great number of changes since that time. Indeed, we might go so far as to say that it is impossible to invent a scientific working-alphabet, at least one that is likely to last. This is because letters are not only sounded by themselves, but also in combination, and the tendency to change is ever present. For instance, *p* in *pin* is different in sound from *p* in *pane* or *pun*, and the *k* of *kin* is not the *k* of *can* or of *cone*. From these last examples it will be seen that we must always speak of *sounds*, not of *written signs*, when talking about the phonetics of a language.

STRESS

The sounds of a language may be united to form syllables, and these united form words. But not all syllables have equal value, because some have *strong stress* or *accent*, some *medium* stress and some *weak* stress (usually called *unaccented*). Indeed, the same syllable of the same word may not always have the same stress. For example, we may use "Indeed" with various intonations to express various feelings, and the stress and vowel sounds will alter in each case though the spelling remain the same. A simple sentence such as "Where are you going?" may be interpreted in at least four different ways, and have change of stress with each. But some languages do not use *stress* or *accent* at all, but rather *pitch* or *intonation* to indicate the relative importance of syllables of words. Intonation and stress are so different that it is all but impossible for a person born to the "musical" language to learn to speak a language with *stress* or "expiratory" accent correctly.

INNER LANGUAGE

So far we have only spoken of the *outer* language, but there is the corresponding *inner* language, and a close reciprocal relation between the two. People often excuse themselves for mistakes in speech by saying they were thinking of something else, which means that unconsciously

speech was accompanying their thought, and here and there becoming audible. Sometimes we catch a person "doing his thinking out loud," *i.e.*, talking to himself, which is again unconscious or inner speech becoming audible.

Thought and speech are inseparably connected. If we closely observe a child learning to speak, we notice first the eager listening for the sounds, then the putting of its own organs into motion to reproduce the sounds. This it cannot always do, but substitutes what it can produce, saying "free" for *three*, or "tis" for *this*, etc. If it sees the object, say a watch, then it has the picture before it to help it reproduce the word. Give it the watch and it has the sense of feeling as an additional aid in recalling the word. Later, at school, he sees the word "watch" written, or writes it himself, and then he has two new and additional aids to memory.

LANGUAGE LEARNING NOT EASY

This example will show that word-getting or language-learning is not such a simple thing as one might imagine after the child has forgotten his early experience with his mother-tongue. It is when we attempt to master a foreign language that we find difficulties on every hand. One way to master these difficulties is to properly classify all words just as we have very unconsciously but very thoroughly done in learn-

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ing our own. It is said that Napoleon I. used to account for his great memory by saying that his head was divided into a great many compartments, and that he kept every fact, every name, every incident perfectly arranged in its own compartment and could find it when wanted. Every learner of a language does this. For example, we say "I love," "we love," using "love" as both singular and plural. Therefore the child learner (and many grown persons are no farther on than children in the use of language) says "*I are*" to correspond to "*we are*," or "*we was*" or "*I done*" for "I did" just as it says correctly "I broke" and "it is broken." The history of the various languages teem with examples of such false analogies, many of which have found their way into daily speech, and are now accepted without question.

LANGUAGE CONTINUALLY CHANGING

Languages are constantly changing (*always unconsciously*) because of changes in the single sounds, or in the forms of the words or in the sentence. A student can make a fair attempt at reading Chaucer, and yet he will not have read ten lines of his most widely known work, the "Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," without meeting with words no longer in use and others still in the language but now used with a different meaning. If he attempt to read aloud these ten

lines so as to reproduce Chaucer's own pronunciation, he is at once struck with the immense difference between his own English and Chaucer's. But let him attempt to go back another 500 years to the days of King Alfred, and he will be at a loss to understand the literature, and will have almost as much difficulty in acquiring a knowledge of Alfred's tongue as in mastering Latin. And yet Alfred talks about the "good old times" when men knew their English well. Languages change continually, but there is little of the haphazard, rather a great deal of regularity in the "laws" which we discover in these changes. For instance, the *i* of Alfred's day has regularly become *ai* in pronunciation (though still written *i*), as *wīn*, wine, *drīfan*, drive, etc.; so *ā* has become *ō*, written *o* or *oa*, as in *bāt*, boat, *stān*, stone. If there should be found what used to be called *exceptions* to such "laws," there must be some way of explaining them, and the explanation which meets the largest number of cases is the correct one.

LIFE OF WORDS

Words live, come into being, decay and die, change meaning, fall into disgrace or rise to honor and extended usefulness. The word *telephone* only came into the language as a coinage after the instrument was invented. We used to have

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in English the word *niman*, to take, just as the Germans have to-day (*nehmen*), but the Scandinavian word *take* pushed it out. We still have *nimble* from the same root. Let any one study the various volumes of the Philological Society's Dictionary, and he will be surprised at the large percentage of *obsolete* (dead) and *obsolescent* (dying) words there recorded. But he will also find that in each generation large numbers of words are rejected that have been trying to get into the language, *i.e.*, they have had little better than an ephemeral existence, or a day's life.

CHANGE IN MEANING

Change of meaning is a very interesting part of the history of a language. Our modern word "*silly*" used to mean "lucky, fortunate." Why did we degrade it and the Germans raise it to honor as *selig*, blessed? And so with *giddy*, which used to mean "full of inspiration (of God)." In olden days the hero, before going into battle, like the modern bully used to tell what he was going to do (*yelp*, boast), but now we leave that to dogs. To-day a great many people do not consider it "polite" to speak of *leg*, but say *limb*. A *nightmare* for the same reason has jokingly become "nighthorse," and a bull a "gentleman cow." These few examples could be multiplied without number.

CLASS LANGUAGE

The reasons for these various changes are often hard to find, but we can begin with the natural tendency to imitate as one cause. Every class in the community has its particular vocabulary, the upper as well as the lower, the educated and the uneducated, the carpenter, the moulder, the farmer and the merchant, the lawyer and the doctor, indeed, in a family of children one will have a most unerring instinct for "big words" and "correct expression," a second will pick up readily all sorts of expressive slang, and a third will use simple speech and direct language full of "homely" words. Nowadays there are no servants in Canada, only "maids" and "ladies" down to the "wash lady," as I once heard her called. The ill-balanced self-improver imitates the broad *a* of the southern Englishman in his effort to climb higher in the social scale, and increases the strain by turning up his trousers and wearing a monocle. Class-words come into vogue, and have some a longer, some a shorter, life. On the other hand we have some very old forms which are hoary with age, such as the distinction in form between *was* and *were*, which reaches back to a time when the Teutonic languages had still the same movable "musical" accent which we find in Greek and Sanscrit.

**DIALECTS GOOD SOURCES
OF NEW WORDS**

Dialects are a very fruitful source of new words, and sometimes a word that has been lost in the "standard" or literary language is reintroduced from a dialect. Thus *bairns*, a good old English word, which died out except in Scotch, is being brought in again from that dialect. But after all, what is a dialect but the speech of a larger or smaller district which shows a certain unity in itself, and certain characteristics which distinguish it from the speech of another district. We in Canada have not yet developed dialects, but we recognise a newness and breeziness about many words current in the West which is not found in Ontario. On the other hand the Maritime Provinces show usages peculiar to themselves, as for instance the word *team*, which means *horse and wagon*, not necessarily *two horses* as in Ontario. It is in the older countries of Europe, France, Germany, England, etc., that we find dialects strongly represented, the growth of centuries, and often preserving very interesting old pronunciations, old forms, old words. Study any such word as *home*, *father*, *mouse*, as recorded in the English Dialect Dictionary, or better still, listen to the unconscious pronunciations of the various Englishmen, Scotchmen or Irishmen you meet almost every day, and you

will be astonished at the great variety of forms used. Sometimes a word comes into use from two dialects, and we have *doublets*, as *kirk* (Scotch), *church* (southern).

"STANDARD" LANGUAGE

Now dialects are bound to exist much more independently of one another so long as no tendency to political centralisation manifests itself in the country, and so long as the school is not general among the people. This political centralisation took place in England very early, so that by Chaucer's time we find the East Midland dialect as spoken in London considered a *standard*. Had Edinburgh become the political centre we should all have been speaking Scotch and looking down on the London dialect. That is, one dialect is just as good and just as interesting as another; it is merely a question of *centre* as to which one becomes a model. So Parisian French is a standard for France, and Berlin German of the official class seems at the present time to be getting the upper hand in Germany. Notwithstanding the fact that a "standard" language was well under way in Chaucer's time, and may be said to have been fully established on the introduction of printing by Caxton, yet the dialects showed very vigorous life down to the last decades of the nineteenth century.

DIALECTS DYING OUT

The growth of the common school, the very rapid spread of education and reading among the lower classes, but especially the development of railways and other means of intercommunication during this century has had the tendency to wipe out sharp dialect distinctions, and it may just be that in a very few years we will not find so many dialects as we do now.

GROWTH OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY

But English more than most modern languages has taken thousands of words from other languages. The first additions were from the Latin before the English left their continental home. These words, however, have so become a part of our speech, that they have gone through all the changes of the native words. No one thinks of *mile*, *street* and *wine* as foreign, and yet they are really *loan* words. We have a few Keltic words from these very early days, and especially *place* and *river*-names, then a couple of "layers" of Latin, then Scandinavian, and even before the conquest some French words. The great bulk of our Anglo-French vocabulary came in with the Normans, but for a couple of centuries we can see that they were felt to be foreign. Chaucer says *vertu*, *nation*, with the accent on the last syllable, but now we treat them

as English, and accent them as we do native words. The stream of foreign additions has been flowing ever since, sometimes full as in the days of the New Learning, sometimes scantily, but the stream never dries up. The English flag flies in all parts of the world, and from every country we get words to denote articles of commerce, customs or arts. These additions keep pace with the growth of English commerce and dominion. Not all foreign words seeking admission have been adopted, as may be seen by consulting the Philological Dictionary. When we come to examine our stock of **imported** words, it is very surprising and interesting to see how they mirror the social and political conditions of the time of admission, so that from these data alone a very interesting English history might be written.

All that has been said of the English may also be said with more or less pertinence of the German, the great continental sister language, and also of the rest of the Teutonic tongues. We find, however, great additional interest in the comparison of our own with these sister languages, for very frequently they show changes similar to our own, while in other respects they have gone in exactly the opposite direction and for quite as good reasons. The comparative study of English and German alone is a most interesting,

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entertaining and instructive subject, and will frequently be drawn upon to furnish a pointed illustration.

Now what sort of language is the English or the German? The Bible tells us that there was originally *one* tongue and *one* language (Gen. xi. 1), and that Adam named all living things. At the tower of Babel confusion of tongues arose (Gen. xi. 7) as a punishment for "upliftedness." In Gen. x. 1, it is said that Noah had three sons, and so the earliest theorists divided the peoples of the earth into *Semites* (Jews and Arabians), *Hamites* (Egyptians, Ethiopians, Berbers, etc.), and *Japhetites* (Indogermans, etc.). Doubtless there is some great historic fact or facts at the basis of this very brief and indistinct Biblical sketch, but it has as yet been entirely impossible to connect all the great families of languages so as to reach back to *one* original tongue. Indeed, although there is some ground for supposing that at one time in the dim past the Indogermans and the Semites were near neighbours, we cannot trace any connection between the two families.

HOME OF INDOGERMANIC FAMILY

In the Bible it is also stated that Eden was the original home of the first man, and because it has been located in Mesopotamia, the earlier students of the Indogerman supposed that the

original home of the family must have been near there. But the latest writers on the subject seem to unite with fair unanimity upon an original home in Europe, perhaps in north-east Germany. With investigation, the difficulties in regard to an original home, people and language all increase and we are farther away from a satisfactory conclusion than ever. But one thing is certain, and that is that science, be it philological, geological or anthropological, proves conclusively that Bishop Usher's Biblical chronology, the basis of the dates in the Authorised Version, is fanciful in the extreme. We must give the Indogermanic languages alone at least 10,000 years in which to have reached their present development.

FAMILIES OF LANGUAGE

There are some fifteen or more great families of language. These are divided according to form into *inflectional* (e.g., the Indogerman), *agglutinative* (such as the Malay, and indeed, the majority of languages), and *isolative* (Chinese, etc.). In inflectional languages words are made up of "*roots*," to which are added "*suffixes*," by means of which the various relations in a sentence are expressed, as *ox*, *ox-EN*; *day*, *day-s*. The various Indogermanic languages are of this class. but English has made very great strides towards

an analytical stage, and has very little real inflexion at present.

In the agglutinating languages words are changed by the use of prefixes, suffixes and infixes. For instance, ILEK *see* in North Celebes becomes MAKailek *comprehend*, MAPailek *show*, PABAilek *become conscious*, PAPAilek *be shown*, etc.

In the *isolating* languages the meaning of the words or *roots* depends upon their position in a sentence with which is connected the intonation, as for example in Chinese, so TÀ may mean *large*, *size*, *very* or *to enlarge*, according to its place in the sentence. It used to be believed that these *root-languages* were the original form in which languages appeared on the earth, but it has been proved that the more ancient Chinese was polysyllabic.

ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

This last statement shows that the origin of language has not yet been solved. Animals have their own language, for they can make each other understand by means of their various cries and gestures. But they differ from men in having a very limited range of expression, and because their language is stationary. The dog *barks* at all times and in all places, even if the Greeks represent the bark by *ou, ou*, the Germans by *wau, wau*, and the English by *bow-wow*. These dif-

ferences result merely from our efforts to represent the bark in terms of human speech.

But man has this same sign language. The English strive to restrain themselves in its use, but in periods of excitement it is sure to come to expression. And we all know how the French, Italians and other Europeans gesticulate while they talk. Indeed, some scientists see in this sign-language the origin of human speech. But the great gulf between the two has never been satisfactorily bridged, and speech still remains the striking distinction between man and brute, no matter how low in the scale man may be or how high the brute.

THE "BOW-WOW" THEORY

How speech first began is unknown. We have a great number of words in our language, and similar words are to be found in all languages, which are *imitative* of sounds such as *bow-wow*, *moo*, *baa*, etc. But the theory of *onomatopæia* does not explain the words *dog*, *cow*, *sheep*, or the large majority of those we use. Therefore this theory has been nicknamed the "bow-wow" theory.

THE "DING-DONG" THEORY

A second theory is that there is in human nature the tendency to answer spontaneously to

certain sense-impressions, as for instance, striking upon metal would instantly call up *ring* in our minds. But this *ding-dong* theory is also very far from explaining the origin of speech.

THE "POOH-POOH" THEORY

A third or *interjectional* theory is just as weak, and rightly dubbed the "pooh-pooh" theory. We do use interjections and plenty of them, but they form a very small per cent. of our whole vocabulary. A still later theory, the "*goo-goo*," begins with assuming that various animal cries form the material out of which our speech grew. Some of these would gradually develop a fixed meaning, and from this beginning and its advantage would grow the larger body of words. This gives due prominence to the animal in man, and also assumes the fact of which there can be no doubt, viz., that in man there is the power to give expression to his various thoughts, moods and feelings, and if the proper word is not in his mind or in his vocabulary, he has power to create it. If it is good it will become current, if the community try it and find it does not answer then it is dropped. That has been the history of thousands of words in our language.

CHILDREN AND LANGUAGE

One of the most interesting studies to the student is watching the child in the workshop of

language. A little nine-year-old was asked what a neighbor was doing with so much new lumber in his yard, was he going to build a fence? "No," she said, "he has *highered* his cellar, and is going to put in a new drain." Her instinct was correct; on the analogy of *lowered* she coined *highered*. We reject it now just as at one time in the past *drive* was rejected as a past plural, or *spun* or *broke* as past singulars. And the fact that we have already a word with the same sound, *hired*, need not cause its rejection, for we have plenty of such *sound-doublets* or *homonyms*. In every family and in every community numberless such examples as I have quoted may be found. Some may go beyond the family into the community, and from the community may gain wide currency and become universal. We are all creators in the field of language, unconscious it may be, but nevertheless creators; it behooves us, therefore, to have a care that we do no violence to our mother-tongue.

This introductory chapter might easily be made longer, indeed, become a book. We reserve some very interesting subjects until later. Such are *popular* and *learned* words, *slang* and *fashion* in language, and especially the *influence of Christianity* upon our speech.